

Local & State

WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE PROJECT IN WALLOWA COUNTY

Forest Service fire focus shifting to private property

By Katy Nesbitt
ForWesCom News Service

ENTERPRISE — Decades of large wildfires across the West have a Wallowa County U.S. Forest Service District staff putting a critical eye to protecting the wildland/urban interface.

More than half of the Forest Service budget goes to fire suppression, a new normal for the 113-year-old agency. Nathan Goodrich, fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest North Zone, said large wildland fire management is becoming less about protecting public land.

“Three-quarters of the time we are essentially protecting private land and private improvements,” Goodrich said. “Doing that in a landscape that hasn’t had any treatment, and trying to put in a fire line or defensible space, is like starting from scratch. When you are looking for a place to catch a fire at the base of the slope, you can’t do that because of private land and structures.”

The problem area along the Wallowa Mountain front is generally at the base of the slope — a sliver of land running from Bear Creek west of Wallowa to Sheep Creek east of Joseph. In all, about 1,800 acres are spread across 40 miles sandwiched between private land and the wilderness.

Goodrich, who grew up in Baker City, said that when funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service created 50/50 cost-share opportunities for private landowners to reduce the number of standing trees per acre on

their property, the Forest Service was asked to do the same on its side of the line.

“Our Wallowa Front Wildland/Urban Interface project covers everything considered high priority along the whole face of the Eagle Caps,” he said.

Much of the private land along the Wallowa Mountain front is adjacent to the Eagle Cap Wilderness, inside of which no harvest or fuels treatment is allowed. Complicating matters, Goodrich said, some of the land, though outside the wilderness, is not accessible by vehicle.

“For decades there were parcels of ground bordering private land we couldn’t manage because they were isolated and there was no way to get there but to hike in,” he said.

But when push came to shove, hike in they did, to burn brush piles and dead and downed debris along the public/private border.

However, the unique project didn’t attract any supplemental funding, so Goodrich said he has to be prudent when deciding where he sends crews to thin, pile and burn.

“We are not going to do all the acres, but concentrate on the lower 300 feet from the private boundary,” he said.

Reducing the number of small trees on both sides of the public/private border is a priority outlined in the recently updated Wallowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The plan divides the county into zones, highlighting areas particularly at risk.

The Protection Plan also designated the area called The Divide as another high prior-

ity wildland/urban interface where private inholdings, some of them hundreds of acres, abut the national forest northeast of Joseph.

In response to the county’s Protection Plan and the Good Neighbor Authority — a program under the 2014 Farm Bill that allows the Forest Service to enter into contracts with state forestry departments to perform forest management services on National Forest System lands — the Wallowa Mountains Office is looking at treating a 25-acre unit surrounded by private land.

District silviculturist Clint Foster explained how federal land managers, state foresters and private landowners work together.

“Under the Good Neighbor Authority I will develop prescriptions and the state will make the timber sale. When the sale is under contract, seed money from the receipts will help fund future projects,” Foster said.

Goodrich said the Wallowa Mountain Office staff is also working on a plan to reduce fuels on about 200 acres around the Canal Burn area near Salt Creek Summit southeast of Joseph.

There, too, Natural Resource Conservation funding is helping private woodlot owners reduce the number of trees per acre, and thus the threat of crown fires, on their properties.

During a field trip of fuels reduction sites in mid-November Goodrich pointed to small “hand piles,” trees cut and stacked to be burned in a year or two by Forest Service fire crews. On flatter land, larger

slash piles had been pushed together by bulldozers. Masticating, a technique the North Zone is just starting to use, shreds small trees and leaves their chips on the ground. Eventually, the organic material will become part of the forest soil.

The late fall field trip was attended by representatives from government agencies and area nonprofit groups. Eric Carlson of the Oregon Department of Forestry is helping landowners determine which treatments are best for their side of the public/private property line. He said while one landowner used heavy equipment to clear out trees infected with mistletoe and to thin out thick crops of grand fir, another followed a timber harvest with mastication.

“Mastication settles down and returns nutrients to the soil with less impact, no equipment tracks and no burning,” Carlson said.

Before mastication, the fairly flat ground had as many as 1,800 trees per acre, Carlson said. Afterward there were as few as 250.

“The specs call for an average of 14-foot spacing,” he said.

The field trip was an expansion of what the Forest Service calls an After Action Review where timber and fire managers meet on the ground with specialists to look at the effects of ground disturbances like thinning and prescribed fire.

“We go out to monitor initial fire effects and a year later go and look again to see if the effects are what we intended or not,” Goodrich said.

FIRE

Continued from Page 1A

Ash said an OSP trooper and a citizen attempted to enter the house twice to rescue Jackson. They were unable to reach her, however, because of heavy smoke and fire.

Jackson was found dead in the home after the fire was extinguished. Four dogs also died in the fire, said Casey Kump, Eastern Oregon deputy fire marshal.

“It was a quickly spreading

fire and she did not have time to evacuate,” Kump said.

Jackie’s husband, Robert Jackson, 73, was able to escape safely before the emergency response units arrived, Ash said.

Kump said today that the fire was determined accidental and started in the chimney of a wood-burning stove in the house.

Kump joined Gary Timm, fire division manager for Baker County Emergency Management, and Eric

Bronson, Huntington fire chief, in expressing appreciation for those who responded to the fire.

“The agencies got there as soon as they could and worked well together,” Timm said.

Firefighters spent about seven hours at the scene.

The house, built in 1910 according to the Assessor’s Office, was totally destroyed in the fire, Timm said.

Ash extended condolences from the Baker County Sheriff’s Office “to the friends and family of Jackie Jackson during this difficult time.”

LOCAL BRIEFING

Leo Adler Foundation awards grants

The Leo Adler Selection Committee awarded grants to 43 nonprofit and governmental recipients, totaling \$543,601.25, for the 2018 community grant program.

Since Adler’s death on Nov. 2, 1993, at age 98, the Leo Adler Foundation has awarded 1,311 grants totaling \$12,178,814, as well as 8,711 college scholarships totaling \$20,995,373.

The 2018 grant recipients include: Baker City First Presbyterian Church, Baker Community Choir, Baker Sports Complex, Baker County Community Literacy Coalition, Baker County Development Corporation, Baker County Library District, Baker County Library Foundation, Baker County Sheriff Search and Rescue, Baker Heritage Museum, Baker High School, Baker Technical Institute, Baker Little League Baseball, Baker Loves Bikes, Eastern Oregon Head Start-Baker City site, Baker Swim Team, Best Friends of Baker Inc., Burnt River Charter School, Burnt River Preschool, CASA of Eastern Oregon, Baker City, Baker City Fire Department, Quail Ridge Golf Course, Cornucopia Arts Council, Crossroads Center for Performing Arts, Eastern Oregon Museum, Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre, Grande Ronde Symphony Association, Greater Bowen Valley Rural Fire Protection District, Huntington School District, Kiwanis International, Music Camps at Wallowa Lake, New Directions Northwest Inc., New Hope for Eastern Oregon Animals, North Powder City Library, North Powder FFA, North Powder Rural Fire Protection District, North Powder Charter School, Northeast Oregon Compassion Center, Rachel Pregnancy Center, St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center, St. Alphonsus Foundation, Tennis Association of Baker, The Salvation Army.

The Committee also awarded lifetime grants totaling \$22,000 to organizations that Adler favored during his lifetime:

4-H Youth Animal Auction, Baker City Firemen’s Fund, Calvary Baptist Church, Church of Nazarene, First Christian Church, First Lutheran Church, First Presbyterian Church, First Ward LDS, Oregon Historical Society, Robison Jewish Society, Second Ward LDS, Shriner’s Hospital Food Drive, Shriner’s Hospital for Children East-West All-Star Football Game, St. Francis Catholic Church, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Baker United Methodist Church

Community Christmas Eve service at BHS

A community Christmas Eve service is planned for Dec. 24 at 6 p.m. at the Baker High School auditorium, 2500 E St.

Public defender system failing, report claims

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon’s system of public defenders for indigent people is so flawed it can’t guarantee clients are getting the defense they’re owed, according to a new draft report.

Oregon Public Broadcasting said the report was completed by the Sixth Amendment Center, a nonprofit group that studies how legal systems across the country are complying with the constitutional requirement.

The Oregon Legislature paid for the report, which cost \$193,000. Report authors studied nine counties in depth, ranging from Harney to Multnomah.

The report found the state lacked oversight of

attorneys with whom it contracts to provide public defense services. And the way it pays attorneys encourages them to deal with cases as quickly as possible.

The report recommends making public defenders state employees, or moving to an hourly pay system and away from the flat case rate model the state’s been using for more than 30 years.

“This compensation plan creates an incentive for attorneys to handle as many cases as possible and to do so as quickly as possible, rather than focusing on their ethical duty of achieving the client’s case-related goals,” the report said.

Community-Wide Christmas Eve Service
December 24th • 6 - 7PM
Baker High School Auditorium

The churches of Baker City present a community-wide Christmas Eve Service.



Weekly Specials December 17-23

Monday	Meatloaf.....	\$8.95
Tuesday	Lasagna.....	\$8.95
Wednesday	Salisbury Steak.....	\$8.95
Thursday	Chicken Fried Steak.....	\$9.95
Friday	All You Can Eat Mini Shrimp.....	\$9.95
	Steak & Shrimp.....	\$10.95
	Pan Fried Oysters.....	\$10.50
Saturday	NY Steak.....	\$13.95
Sunday	Chicken & Dumplings.....	\$9.50/8.95 sr

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Sunday 8 AM - 11 AM
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These individuals, organizations and businesses are supporting our senior Dining Center for this month:

Phyllis Galloway
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Elkhorn Eagles
Town & Country
Bridge Group
Black's Distributing

Meadowbrook Place
Baker Vision Clinic
Settler's Park
Baker County Veterans

Prime Rib December 28th
Seniors suggested donation \$8
Non-Seniors \$10

Closed December 24th & 25th

Thank you to Gray's West & Co., Safeway and Heart N Home for donating the cake! The Dining Center is open Monday through Friday, serving 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. Closed on holidays. The suggested donation for senior lunches, for people over 60 and under 12 is \$4.50. Non-senior meal price is \$6.75. Come and enjoy visiting with friends over a good meal.

Other activities available:
Aerobic exercise, bingo, Tai Ji, Tai Chi, bridge, pinochle, dancing, blood pressure checks and more!

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